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IDENTICAL LETTERS DATED 26 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement dated 25 February 1998 by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the rejection by the Greek Government of the Turkish proposals for settlement of the entire set of problems in the Aegean (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hüseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement made on 25 February 1998 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey on the rejection by the Government of Greece of the Turkish proposals for the settlement of the problems in the Aegean

1. The Greek Ambassador in Ankara presented to the Turkish Foreign Minister, on 24 February 1998, the reply of the Greek Government to the note verbale of the Turkish Government of 12 February 1998.

2. The note verbale of the Turkish Government of 12 February 1998 contained the following views and proposals in brief:

The present tension in the Aegean is likely to lead to an accident or a military confrontation or similar dangerous incidents. This situation is a serious cause of concern for regional peace. With a view to curbing the tension, Turkey made the following proposals to the Greek side:

(a) Implementing, without delay, the approaches previously suggested by the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union (the Madrid Declaration, confidence-building measures and the meeting of the Wisemen Group), which are all in conformity with international law and international understanding;

(b) With this aim in mind, jointly identifying the problems existing between the two countries by the representatives of both countries; a high-level meeting between the two Foreign Ministries to discuss how to implement the peace and conciliation process proposed by Turkey.

3. Unfortunately, the Greek side totally rejected all the realistic and well-intentioned proposals made by Turkey in its note of 24 February. It has thus been displayed once more very clearly before the international community that the official Greek foreign policy is to maintain continuance of the tension in the Aegean and to leave Greece's problems with Turkey unresolved.

World public opinion and major capitals concerned supported the constructive approach offered by Turkey to Greece for the settlement of these disputes. However, the Greek Government could not reciprocate the goodwill of Turkey and by ignoring this initiative has once again assumed an uncompromising position.

4. The Greek Government has once again rejected the implementation of the peaceful means of settlement foreseen by international law. "International law" is reflected in:

(a) Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations:

"The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation,

arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice";

(b) Security Council resolution 395 (1976) of 25 August 1976:

"The Security Council ... calls upon the Governments of Greece and Turkey to resume direct negotiations over their differences and appeals to them to do everything within their power to ensure that these negotiations will result in mutually acceptable solutions";

(c) The approach set forth in Agenda 2000 of the European Union for the settlement of territorial disputes:

"The Commission considers that before accession, applicants should make every effort to resolve any outstanding border dispute among themselves or involving third countries. Failing this they should agree that the dispute be referred to the International Court of Justice."

These are the methods of "international law" that Turkey has been proposing to Greece, to other countries concerned and to world public opinion for months, that is, the international methods of peaceful settlement, which have been rejected by Greece.

"International law" is the concept reflected in Turkey's proposal to Greece of "negotiation, discussion and conciliation".

Greece stands, so far, as the only country that refuses talks, negotiations and dialogue.

The Greek Government has tried to present its own self-distorted legal perception as international law, deceiving world public opinion for years.

It has introduced only one of the several "peaceful means of settlement" adopted by the United Nations recourse to the International Court of Justice, as if it was the only and absolute method under international law. However, the determined initiatives of the Turkish Government in recent months have demonstrated the reality to all countries concerned. It is now clear to everyone that "international law" is not just the International Court of Justice, but that recourse to the Court is just one of the several methods open under international law.

Athens has taken off its mask and now the truth is visible.

5. The misleading impression that Greece's unfair attitude created in international forums has been losing its effect through Turkey's initiatives. The Greek Government is well aware of this situation and is therefore becoming more aggressive. It applies the conventional methods of all the "unjust" resorted to throughout history of hiding behind a method of "not negotiating" and "not discussing" vis-à-vis Turkey's proposals and tries to consolidate its position by evasive approaches and replies such as "if we meet, we can discuss". In this way, it has shown its true colours.

Greece's insistence on her claim that "there is only one problem in the Aegean" is actually trivial, given the existence of a number of problems in the Aegean that have been recognized by all the countries of the world, such as the militarization of the eastern Aegean islands contrary to the provisions of international treaties and the claim by Greece of national airspace of 10 nautical miles.

The Greek Government, in line with its concerns related to domestic politics and its foreign policy assessments, made its choice concerning the continuity of tension in the Aegean. This is its choice and it must pay for the results of it. This choice of the Greek Government, seeking tension in the Aegean, has become tangible since it has once again avoided the settlement of these problems.

Through this government policy of favouring tension in the Aegean, Greece, in the face of history, no doubt bears unilateral responsibility for any undesirable incident and its dangerous consequences in the Aegean.

6. Turkish foreign policy is traditionally based on peace and good-neighbourly relations, but, Greece should understand by now that this policy does not mean that we shall indefinitely tolerate ill-tempered attitudes against international law and our national interests. Unfortunately, by its note of 24 February 1998, the Greek side totally rejected the realistic proposals of Turkey, which have also received the support of world public opinion. It has thus been revealed before the international community that the official Greek foreign policy is to maintain tension continuously in the Aegean and to leave the problems with Turkey unresolved.

7. The Turkish Government will again communicate its policy through a note verbale in which the views raised in the Greek reply are examined and responded to.

Turkey will continue to stand as the party proposing peace and conciliation, even if Greece maintains her dangerous approach towards the Aegean and its people.

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